DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 183 110 HE 012 367

AUTHOR Froomkin, Joseph
TITLE How to Relieve the Effects of the Demographic Downturn: Some Policy Alternatives.
PUB DATE Aug 79
NOTE 11p.: Paper presented to the American Sociological Association, 1979

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Adult Students: *College Attendance: *College Graduates: Continuous Learning: *Educational Trends: *Employment Opportunities: *Enrollment Projections: Higher Education: *Job Market: Preschool Education

ABSTRACT

Job prospects for college graduates in the face of demographic decline is discussed, including likely increases in opportunities for teachers and maintenance of the status quo for government agency staffs. The following possible ways to alleviate the misallocation between education and job opportunities are examined: (1) the possibility of increasing enrollments, so as to use some of the educated labor force either as teachers or as students, and (2) government intervention to create jobs for at least a small segment of the highly educated persons. The likeliest places to increase enrollments are at the nursery school level and among the adult population. However, there are good reasons why efforts to increase preschool attendance rates are not likely to be successful. There is little prospect of increasing the enrollment rates of children between the ages of 5 and 17. Because of worsening employment prospects for college graduates in the early 1970s, college students chose to minimize their investment in a college education, and many students now attend college part-time and work concurrently. A rapid increase in the numbers of adults attending college is not likely. One group that will face bleak prospects for jobs in the new decade is new Ph.D.s. One innovation that may have an effect on the problem is for schools to play a role in supplementing apprenticeship programs through instruction, as is the case in Europe. It is concluded that the retraining of teachers or their updating about developments in their fields should rank high on the educational agenda, and that higher education institutions need to devise special arrangements for part-time students. (SW)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED183110

FEB 15 1980

HOW TO RELIEVE THE EFFECTS OF THE DEMOGRAPHIC DOWNTURN: SOME POLICY ALTERNATIVES

By Joseph Froomkin

The demographic slowdown has soured the job prospects of college graduates. The coming demographic decline is likely to result in even worse job markets for the well-educated. The reason for the crisis can be summed up in a nutshell. The U.S. has geared up a mighty postsecondary system. Between half and 70 per cent of the products of this system used to be employed in teaching or in other government-subsidized jobs. But in the course of the next ten years, the demand for teachers is likely to be even lower than it is today, and government agencies will not be able to increase their staffs because of the taxpayers' reluctance to assign an increasing share of their income to pay for public services.

Depending on which Census projection one picks to describe reality in the fall of 1989, ten years from now, the nursery school through 12th grade enrollment is likely to decline by between 3.0 and 6.7 million students.[1] This decline may cost between 150,000 to 350,000 teaching jobs.[2] The lowest figure is probably one and a half times the annual new hires of teachers in 1979. The higher figure is equivalent to 3½ years' additions to the teaching staffs of nursery through 12 grades. In other words, in the next ten years, we shall have somewhere between 5 and 12 per cent fewer teachers in the

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Joseph Froomkin

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

HE012 367

classrooms if present standards of staffing do not change

In the postsecondary area, prospects are also somber. During the next decade, full-time faculty members are likely to lose between 30,000 and 60,000 jobs. These losses represent something between 8 and 16 per cent of the current full-time faculty employed by higher education institutions.

To make matters worse, the economy is likely to grow slowly and human and government services are likely to be curbed as a result of the mounting taxpayer revolt. By 1989, four million college graduates are likely to work in jobs which in today's society are filled by persons without a college degree. Probably as many as one out of four or one out of five college graduates will not make full use of his training.

In these circumstances, it is only natural to ask whether any public policies will alleviate this misallocation between education and job opportunities. Two obvious avenues must be explored: 1) the possibility of increasing enrollments, so as to sop up some of the educated labor force either as teachers or as students, and 2) government intervention to create jobs for at least a small segment of the highly educated persons, lest their talents wither on the vine.

Can enrollments be increased?

The likeliest places to increase enrollments are at the lowest and highest ends of the age spectrum: in nursery school and among the adult population.

In the past five years, the enrollment of three- and

four-year-olds in nursery school has been stuck at roughly a third of the eligible population. If pre-school enrollments were to increase to 50 per cent of the age eligibles, between 1.2 and 1.4 million pre-schoolers would be added to the school rolls between now and 1989. Depending upon whether they attended a full day or half a day, between 60,000 and 140,000 school teachers would be needed to teach them. In other words, the birth rate would need to pick up and nursery school enrollments would need to go up to stop the teaching force from shrinking.

If I were picking a college major tomorrow, however, I would not count on increased rates of attendance by pre-schoolers. There are good reasons why steam to increase pre-school enrollments is not likely to be generated in the near future. The rationale for cognitive programs for pre-schoolers has not been accepted enthusiastically by the educational establishment. A divided establishment is not likely to mobilize the necessary political support for expansion of a marginally popular program. In the near future, pre-school groups will also face increasing competition from a much better organized lobby, one which is attempting to create the climate for increased public support of day care for working mothers. The day care lobby has not stressed the cognitive component of nursery education and it is not likely that many teachers will find jobs in newly established day care centers.

There is little prospect of increasing the enrollment rates of children between the ages of 5 and 17. Ninety-seven

per cent of all children in that age group are already enrolled in regular school. At least half of the remaining 3 per cent benefit from some special services in schools for handicapped children and it is doubtful that the remaining 1.5 per cent can benefit from more than custodial care. Although some expansion of training of some handicapped children is in the cards, no more than 50,000 professionals will be required to serve some 600,000 severely handicapped children. A plateau has also been reached in the schools' efforts to retain 18- and 19-year-olds. Eighty-five per cent of recent cohorts have graduated from high school by age 19. Public programs to increase this graduation rate have been unsuccessful and the chances that new programs will be sponsored are remote.

Conceivably, college enrollments--the next step on the ladder--could be stimulated by public policy. Or could they? Recent analyses sponsored by the Carnegie Council on Policy Studies of Higher Education have produced convincing evidence that massive federal subsidies have not resulted in increased enrollments of students from economically-weak families.[3] The principal effect has been to relieve parents of the burden of college costs.

As employment prospects for college graduates worsened in the early 1970s, college students chose to minimize their investment in a college education. As a result, an increasing proportion of students now attend college part-time and work concurrently. We have projected that this proportion will continue

to grow as the prospects for the employment of college graduates continue to worsen.

Thus the number of students enrolled in college in 1989 is not likely to differ significantly from the current level unless large numbers of older adults decide to take college courses.[4] Even so, our projections indicate that the full-time equivalent workload of postsecondary institutions may decrease between 10 and 20 per cent, depending upon the students' propensities to attend college full-time or part-time. In other words, just to keep workloads stable, between 1.6 and 1.7 million additional full-time equivalent students will have to be found among adults between now and 1981.

As of 1977, 1.3 million persons age 35 or older were enrolled[5] in some college course. The full-time equivalent of this enrollment was roughly 600,000. Currently, roughly 1.4 per cent of all adults age 35 or older are enrolled in some college course at any one time. In the course of one year, possibly as many as 2.2 per cent are likely to attend some collegiate institution. Thus the number of adults who enroll in college would have to quadruple from current levels to fill the gap created by younger adults. To quadruple this rate, between 8 and 9 per cent of all adults would have to enroll in some college course during the year. The average adult would then be expected to spend 3 to 3½ years taking college courses between age 35 and his death--and we would truly become a learning society.

I do not believe in such rapid growth in adult education.

My pessimism is based on the following premises: 1) most studies of the demand for adult education have documented the fact that adults are not willing to pay very much for either vocational or avocational courses, and 2) most college instruction for adults has been given to professionals, particularly teachers who take courses to upgrade their credentials. In the next decade, the mobility among professionals will be reduced and employers will be less willing to pay for additional college instruction. Besides, the number of teachers will decline, as we have pointed out, and an increasing number of teachers will have accumulated the necessary number of credits to put them at the top of the pay scale. Thus, another incentive to adult education will be removed.

Unless one believes that there is an unlimited market for avocational courses among older persons, one must be fairly cautious about the future of adult education. Even if one accepts the notion of a learning society, economy measures in the higher education sector will curb the very large subsidies that would be needed to offer free instruction to adults.

Will new policies bail out college graduates?

It is beyond the capacity of any level of government to restructure jobs so as to make full use of the education of college graduates and persons with some college education. The prospect that small cosmetic changes can change the job outlook for this group of people is remote.

A few small groups of worthy persons with particular

problems may yet find a responsive environment for increased subsidies. One such group consists of Ph.D.s who will graduate in the next ten years. Persons with doctoral degrees will face particularly bleak prospects during the next decade. Academic placements are likely to decline to one-half to one-quarter the rate experienced in the current depressed academic market. Fewer than a third and possibly as few as one in five new Ph.D.s will find academic jobs during this period. There is some talk in Washington today of establishing temporary positions for this unfortunate generation of doctorates. Nevertheless, some effort should be made to adjust education to the demands of society.

Three possible innovations which would put our educational system in better tune for the future immediately come to mind. The first one is the development of more elaborate educational components to be included in apprenticeship programs. In most European countries, educators play an important role in supplementing apprenticeship programs with instruction. This is not the case in the United States. Some serious attention should be paid to the educational component of the European system. By combining the two streams of instruction, Europeans have broadened the scope of apprenticeship in many service occupations performed in small establishments. This is an area where U.S. training could stand improvement.

Second, as the turnover of teachers declines and teachers become older, the retraining of teachers or their updating about developments in their fields should rank high on the

educational agenda. Such retraining would be much more effective if special programs could be designed for experienced teachers through cooperative relations between school districts and colleges and universities. Studies of the training of experienced teachers have shown that positive effects are more likely to be found when all the teachers from a given school are retrained at the same time.

Third, institutions of higher education will have to devise special arrangements for part-time students. Whether these programs ought to emphasize job-related skills or general education is still an open question.

I have argued[6]

> that the majority of young persons are likely to want a taste of postsecondary education, just as they do today. (I suggest) that they can get it by registering for 2/3 of the full-time school load (8-10 credits) and also working some 25 to 30 hours a week. This would mean that the students would obtain their bachelor's degree in six years rather than four. For their part, employers would be encouraged to split two jobs among three youngsters, a reasonable solution since there would be a shortage of young workers.
>
> To make this plan work, we recommend that part-time students be reimbursed for their tuition, fees, transportation and books, and also receive a small stipend ($150 a month), if they participate in the labor force and are employed at least 40 weeks during the year, working no more than 25 hours each week. The average stipend per student in this program would amount to $1,200.
>
> This would create an incentive for young people to work and study at the same time, thus addressing the issue of (the future) youth labor shortages. Concurrently, this proposal would make it more attractive for employers to hire part-time students,

> since it would result in more productive workers at a lower hourly cost. In other words, employers could obtain better quality workers, at a lower price, because these workers would receive an additional subsidy for their studies.

I believe that the big challenge to the well-educated from now on will be to find new ways to use learning which cannot be utilized in the workplace. Perhaps this challenge could be met by establishing new networks through which people can share and enjoy knowledge, networks which do not depend on public subsidy. This would lead to a society in which diverse groups could keep their minds alive by taking in each other's knowledge.

FOOTNOTES

[1]U.S. Bureau of the Census, Current Population Reports, Series P-25, No. 704, "Projections of the Population of the United States: 1977 to 2050," U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 1977 and "School Enrollment," Series P-20, Nos. 110, 321, and 333.

[2]Based on pupil teacher ratios in public schools from Martin M. Frankel, Projections of Education Statistics to 1986-87, p.59.

[3]Next Steps for the 1980s in Student Financial Aid, Comments and Recommendations by the Carnegie Council on Policy Studies in Higher Education, The Council, Berkeley, California: 1979, p. 4. Also see Joseph Hurd, Enrollment and Cost Effects of Financial Aid Plans for Higher Education, Carnegie Council on Policy Studies in Higher Education, Technical Report No. 1, July 1977.

[4]See J. M. B. Edwards, American Higher Education to 1985, Report to DHEW by the Educational Policy Research Center, Washington, D.C., February 1979.

[5]See Series P-20, No. 31.

[6]Joseph Froomkin, Needed: A New Federal Policy for Higher Education, Institute for Educational Leadership, The George Washington University, Washington, D.C., n.d., p. 48.